

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of the claims replaces all previous listings and versions of the claims in the application.

Listing of the Claims:

1. (currently amended) Apparatus for controlling an interactive virtual environment, the apparatus comprising ~~means for defining a unit which defines~~ a virtual environment populated by objects, the objects comprising avatars and props, wherein objects within the virtual environment may be dynamically attached to and detached from other objects, ~~characterised~~ characterized in that one or more of the props has associated with it information defining one or more animations which may be performed by an avatar when said avatar interacts with the prop, the avatar being operable to query the prop for the information defining the animation that the avatar is to perform when the avatar interacts with the prop, and wherein when the prop is dynamically attached to another object, the information defining the animation(s) to be performed by one or more of the avatars during an interaction with the prop, remains associated with the prop.

2. (original) Apparatus according to claim 1 wherein, when an object is attached to another object, it inherits the movement of the object to which it is attached.

3. (currently amended) Apparatus according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, further comprising ~~means for storing a unit which stores~~ an animation sequence for subsequent replay or editing.

4. (currently amended) Apparatus according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, being an apparatus for playing a computer game.

5. (currently amended) Apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising: ~~means for allowing a unit which allows~~ a user to control the virtual environment to create an animation sequence.

6. (currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1, wherein the animation or animations are defined as part of a state machine which is associated with the prop.

7. (original) Apparatus according to claim 6 wherein the state machine comprises a state transition which defines an initial state, a final state, and at least one of a prop anima-

tion which takes the prop from the initial state to the final state, and an avatar animation which takes the avatar from the initial state to the final state, and optionally back to the initial state.

8. (original) Apparatus according to claim 7 wherein a precondition is associated with one of the states.

9. (currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~any of claims 6 to 8~~ claim 6, wherein the state machine has an idle state.

10. (currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~claims 3, or any of claims 6 to 9 when appended to claim 3~~, wherein an animation sequence is stored as a script comprising a list of commands.

11. (original) Apparatus according to claim 10 wherein the commands are the same commands as may be entered by a user in order to control the virtual environment.

12. (currently amended) Apparatus according to claim 10 ~~or 11~~, wherein a script contains an instruction which is to be passed to an object in the virtual environment.

13. (original) Apparatus according to claim 12 wherein the instruction is only passed to the object once an animation which precedes it in the script has been played out.

14. (currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein an avatar comprises at least a file defining its appearance, and an animation defining its movements.

15. (currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein a plurality of avatars share a common animation.

16. (original) Apparatus according to claim 15 wherein the common animation is retargeted to fit the size of the avatar in question.

17. (currently amended) Apparatus according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein a prop includes a file which specifies a way in which the prop may contain other props.

18. (currently amended) A method of controlling an interactive virtual environment, the method comprising defining a virtual environment populated by objects, the objects comprising avatars and props, wherein:

objects within the virtual environment may be dynamically attached to and detached from other objects, characterised in that one or more of the props has associated with it information defining one or more animations which may be performed by an avatar when said avatar interacts with the prop, the avatar being operable to query the prop for the information defining the animation that the avatar is to perform when the avatar interacts with the prop, and wherein when the prop is dynamically attached to another object, the information defining the animation(s) to be performed by one or more of the avatars during an interaction with the prop, remains associated with the prop.

19. (original) A method of controlling an interactive virtual environment according to claim 18, the method comprising the further steps of:

allowing a user to control the virtual environment to create an animation sequence;
and

storing an animation sequence for subsequent replay or editing.

20. (currently amended) A computer program which, when run on a computer, causes the computer to carry out the method of ~~any of claim 18 to 19, or to become the apparatus according to any of claims 1 to 17.~~

21. (currently amended) A computer readable storage medium having stored thereon a computer program which, when run on a computer, causes the computer to carry out the method of ~~any of claim 18 or 19, or to become the apparatus according to any of claims 1 to 17.~~

22. (new) A computer program which, when run on a computer, causes the computer to become the apparatus according to claim 1.

23. (new) A computer readable storage medium having stored thereon a computer program which, when run on a computer, causes the computer to become the apparatus according to claim 1.

24. (new) Apparatus for controlling an interactive virtual environment, the apparatus comprising means for defining a virtual environment populated by objects, the objects comprising avatars and props, wherein objects within the virtual environment may be dynamically attached to and detached from other objects, characterized in that one or more of the props has associated with it information defining one or more animations which may be performed by an avatar when said avatar interacts with the prop, the avatar being operable to query the prop for the information defining the animation that the avatar is to perform when the avatar interacts with the prop, and wherein when the prop is dynamically attached to another object, the information defining the animation(s) to be performed by one or more of the avatars during an interaction with the prop, remains associated with the prop.